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**ETAN/Canada at UN Decol. Comittee**

Brief presented by the East Timor Alert Network/Canada

To the Special Committee on the Situation with Regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples

Honourable Chairperson, Honourary Members,

My name is Sharon Scharfe and I represent the East Timor Alert Network/ Canada (ETAN). ETAN is a grassroots organization, with branches in fifteen Canadian cities. ETAN is present at this Committee Hearings to add the concerns of Canadians relating to the ongoing tragedy in East Timor.

One of the activities ETAN pursues is lobbying the Canadian government and Members of Parliament to bring a greater emphasis concerning to human rights in Canada's foreign policy relating to Indonesia. There have been some successes which I will briefly outline.

POSITIVE MOVES BY CANADIAN GOVERNMENT WITH REGARDS TO EAST TIMOR

The Canadian government has stated that human rights concerns are an integral part of its foreign policy. To this end, Prime Minister Chretien expressed his concerns about human rights violations in East Timor when he met with President Suharto in Seattle in November 1993.

However, the clearest indication of Canada's expressed concerns has been reflected in its aid policies. After the 1991 Dili Massacre, the Canadian government suspended three planned aid projects totalling $30 million. Last November, Canada informed the Indonesian government of its decision to cancel these three projects from its development programme. In May of this year, the Indonesian government cancelled a Canadian aid project in Sulawesi totalling $38 million due to the strong human rights criticisms that were being raised by Canadian citizens concerning the Indonesian government's genocidal actions in East Timor. These two cases are the best expressions of the fact that the Canadian government is listening to the concerns of Canadian citizens.

I recently had the priviledge of attending the Asia-Pacific Conference on East Timor in the Philippines. While there, I spoke on the issue of human rights violations in East Timor in the context of those experienced by women. While I am not a Timorese woman, and I do not purport to speak on their behalf, I would like to take a moment or two to bring to your attention some of my findings.

HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS AGAINST THE WOMEN OF EAST TIMOR

There are two categories where Indonesia's illegal occupation and genocidal actions have specifically affected women in East Timor, namely those women who are actively resisting (i.e., involved with FALINTIL); and those who are passively resisting.(1) I will focus on the second category, namely passive resistance which can be broken down into two sub-categories, the first being women who are directly affected and the second being women who are indirectly affected.

(A) East Timorese Women Directly Affected by Indonesia's Illegal Occupation of East Timor

East Timorese women have been directly affected by Indonesia's invasion. Untold tens of thousands of women have been murdered, raped, sexually assaulted, tortured, kidnapped and forcibly sterilized. While it is impossible to speak of all the horrors that the women of East Timor have experienced, I will give a brief overview of some of the crimes experienced speccifically by women.

i) Rape and Sexual Assault

There are many documented cased of women who have been forced to become local "wives" for the Indonesian military posted in East Timor. This has led to children being conceived through these imposed husbands.

Other women have been raped by Indonesian soldiers in front of their families.(2) "For Timorese people, worse than physical suffering was the moral suffering of these things, the humiliation, taking away the dignity of people. I said to Indonesian officers, "Don't you have mothers, sisters, do you know what it means

to be human?"" Monsignor Martinho da Costa Lopes, a former parish priest and assistant to the Bishop in Dili, recounts,

"People came knocking at my door in the day and the night, for years, whispering of terrible things. From 1975 the Bishop's residence was full of girls seeking refuge. In the Comarca prison were women who had all been raped and abused. They told me when I spoke with them. We heard constantly of young girls being abused by soldiers. The Indonesians often use Timorese not as people but as toys, young girls especially. They see a beautiful girl they want, then after they have used her they ignore what happens to her, like a child with a toy."(3)

Many East Timorese women were raped and sexually assaulted while in custody, whether it was in the custody of the police or while being held in jail. Often such rapes result in pregnancy.

ii) Forced Sterilization, Birth Control and Depo Provera

In 1985, a family planning center funding by the World Bank was built in Dili. Already by that time, 183 of 442 villages in East Timor had family planning centers, and the program most vigorously pursued in East Timor was the family planning program of the Indonesian government.

Contraceptive methods promoted in East Timor and elsewhere include condoms, the Pill, injection of hormones, IUD and implants, but in East Timor the use of injections (Depo Provera) is proportionately greater than Indonesia.(4) It is not difficult to understand the relationship between population control as a target-based programme and the type of contraceptive promoted. Condoms and the pill are falling out of favour with the family planning agency (BKKBN) because the effect depends on the decision of the individual, whereas IUDs and implants which can only be inserted and removed by trained medical staff are considered effective. "Effective" is synonymous with "low user control". The long-acting hormonal contraceptive implant Norplant, lasting five years, is termed an "MKE"(metode Kontrasepsi efektif) along with IUDs and sterilization.

The "informed consent", which is essential in any birth control program if it is not to be regarded as a human rights violation, is often not present, according to East Timorese nurses who have observed East Timorese women being injected (and since emigrated to Portugal). These nurses say that in many cases the women are never even told that the injection they are being given a contraceptive. In one specific case, high school girls were injected with Depo Provera without their knowledge.(5)

It is very difficult to refuse to take part in these programme because village leaders are urged to cooperate, and in come cases it is imposed as the norm where local clinics for birth control are under the supervision of military post. It is nearly impossible for the women of East Timor to protest the forced birth control. The villages of East Timor are under the de facto control of the Indonesian military, and to protest against forced injections, etc., is to lay oneself open to execution or disappearance.

The World Bank official who was responsible for the birth control program in East Timor stated that "Although at the beginning of the program there may have been excesses or cases of force, now the Indonesian health officials are carrying out proper guidance." The non-governmental Indonesian Family Planning Association has said that they do not have a project in East Timor because "the conditions are not present for carrying out family planning in East Timor".

Given that over 200,000 East Timorese have been killed since Indonesia invaded in 1975, it is impossible for the Indoneisan government to state that there is a problem with over-population. In fact, the genocidal policies of Indoneia have been so effective that in 1989 the United Nations presented the UN Population Award to President Suharto.

Another effective method for keeping the birth rate in East Timor to a minimum results when hospital staff kill new born babies because the child's parents are suspected of belonging to Fretilin.

As a result of these and other abuses by hospital staff, it should be noted that many East Timorese, male and female alike, prefer the clinics run by the Sisters over the horrors of the hospital. In East Timor, people say "We go to the hospital to die". They cannot trust and depend on a hospital.

(B) East Timorese Women Indirectly Affected by Indonesia's Illegal Occupation

The second category I have identified relates to women who have been indirectly affected by Indonesia's illegal occupation. These include women who's husbands, children, parents, friends, other relatives who have been killed, tortured or have disappeared. This was reiterated in a recent letter written to Hilary Clinton from a group of mothers in East Timor. I will be brief on this topic due to time constraints. One example of these indirect abuses relates to the Indonesian military who kidnaps male East Timorese children and takes them back to Indonesia to act as servants.

CONCLUSION

What is happening to the women of East Timor is in direct contravention of many international conventions. These include the Convention for the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide(6); the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (which Indonesia has ratified); the UN Charter; the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; the International Conventions on Civil and Political Rights and on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; and, most relevant to the Special Committee, directly contravenes the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples.

Given that the people of East Timor have been subjected to alien subjugation, domination and exploitation for almost 19 years by the illegal presence and genocidal actions of the Indonesian military, which constitutes a denial of fundamental human rights; and given the human rights violations that have been occuring systemically towards women in East Timor during this time and continue unto today, the East Timor Alert Network/Canada calls upon the Special Commitee on Decolonization to send a special mission to East Timor to obtain first-hand information on these abuses. Such a mission should be done in conjunction with the Government of Portugal, who is the UN recognized administering power of East Timor.

East Timor is the largest territory on the Special Committee's agenda of non-self-governing territories. Only when the Indonesian military has pulled out of East Timor, and the state is given the right to a free and fair vote will the women of East Timor begin the long overdue healing process.

I thank you for the opportunity to express our concerns today.

NOTES

1) The following excerpt is from Michele Turner's book, TELLING: East Timor: Personal Testimonies 1942-1992, who reports a conversation with a man named Justino who states at page 183 the following:

> "Timorese talk about the Resistance as of two kinds, active and passive. Those in the town or the camp resist passively. It's hard to explain. you must do whatever the Indonesians say, but what you think, that's only for you, you keep it inside yourself. We've been resisting so long now we've reached a point where even the simple kids are quite aware of what we all want. They can go the schools run by the Indonesians but that doesn't change them. They don't need to learn that they aren't free. They hear and see the wrongs all around. The motivation for Timorese to study in Indonesia is that to fight the enemy you have to know him."

2) Testimony of Xavier as told in TELLING:

> "Friends of mine living in Manatutu, the husband went to Dili for business. There were a lot of Javanese soldiers there. They knew the husband was away -- in a small place everyone knows things -- and they went to the house and raped the wife. There were three little kids in the house, very frightened. Nobody could help, this is the army, they shoot you. They take turns to rape the wife while others steal things from the house. When the husband returned he complained to their commander, but none were punished. His wife survived but she was always very sad."

3) From Turner's TELLING at 165.

4) 1987, percentages

| | The Pill | IUD | Depo Provera | Condom |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Indonesia | 48.5 | 24.1 | 19.0 | 4.4 |
| East Timor | 23.0 | 12.6 | 59.7 | 1.4 |

SOURCE: Indonesian Central Information Board, 1988

5) Between 1987 and 1988, in almost all schools in East Timor, female students 13 years of age and older were given injections of "some medicine". One of the staff at a health center happened to find out that it was a contraceptive and as a result the injection was stopped. At the end of 1988, the governor of East Timor learned of what was happening, because his own daughter was a student at a school where only girl students were being injected. One is left to wonder had the Governor's daughter was affected, how long would this abhorent practice continued.

6) The Convention defines genocide as meaning any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, by:

* Killing members of the group;

* Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;

* Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;

* Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;

* Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.